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Source: *The Russian Review*, Jan., 1974, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Jan., 1974), pp. 37-49

Published by: Wiley on behalf of The Editors and Board of Trustees of the Russian Review

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*Dimensions of Democracy and Authority in Caucasian Armenia, 1917-1920**

By Richard G. Hovannisian

The formation of an Armenian republic in southwestern Transcaucasia during World War I posed the challenge of implementing democratic procedures in a land accustomed to arbitrary and bureaucratic rule. An evaluation of the Armenian response to the challenge may well prompt one to question whether democracy took root at all and, more generally, whether adherence to democratic principles in emergent, scarcely organized states is in the best interest of the citizenry.

It is quite logical that the new political entity should have been declared a democratic republic, for nearly all elements involved in the Armenian emancipatory movement had exalted the approaching triumph of egalitarianism over tyranny. Long before the possibility of independence existed, those groups were advocating the creation of autonomous national regions in the Russian and Ottoman empires, with government for and, in large measure, by the people. Hence, when the chaos of war and revolution brought about the independence of Russian Armenia, basically the provinces of Erevan and Kars, the national leaders could opt for no other than the republican system.¹

Earlier, in 1917, when the March revolution toppled the Romanov

* This article is based on a paper presented at Harvard University during a conference on "Authority and Democracy in Armenian Society," sponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research in collaboration with Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies.

¹ The citations that follow provide only a selective introduction to the sources for Transcaucasian history from the disintegration of Russian imperial rule to the establishment of Soviet order in the three successor states of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. For a concise account of the formation of the three independent republics, see Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917-1921)*, New York and Oxford, 1951; and, for a current Soviet interpretation, see A. N. Surguladze, *Zakavkaz'e v borbe za pobedu sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii*, Tbilisi, 1971.

dynasty and introduced the Provisional Government in Russia, many Armenian, Georgian, and Azerbaijani spokesmen believed that the Caucasus would be reorganized into national-geographic units federated with a democratic Russian republic.² In the election for the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, the body charged with determining the future status of the peoples and territories of the former empire, the Caucasian parties campaigned with intense fervor. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Hai Heghapokhakan Dashnaksutun) was highly gratified by the results of that first general election, for the party's slate received more than eighty percent of the Armenian vote.³ Dashnaksutun had espoused a platform of social and egalitarian reforms but, like its kindred Russian Social Revolutionary party, was fashioned along both democratic and authoritarian lines. Structured hierarchically with a supreme bureau (at times two bureaus) at the pinnacle, the Federation nonetheless allowed its regional central committees substantial latitude, in part because of the worldwide dispersion of the Armenian people.⁴

The enthusiasm elicited by the Constituent Assembly campaign was soon dampened by the turn of events in Russia. The November revolution and ensuing civil war severed the Caucasus from the central provinces. The Russian armies that had stood in occupation of Turkish (Western) Armenia deserted en masse, and the Christian peoples of the Caucasus were left faced with the dread specter of Ottoman invasion. Denouncing the Bolshevik coup and proclaiming

² Events in the Caucasus during the tenure of the Provisional Government and its Special Transcaucasian Committee (Osobyi Zakavkazskii Komitet) are presented with broadly varying interpretations in the following representative publications: S. E. Sef, *Revoliutsiia 1917 goda v Zakavkaz'e (dokumenty, materialy)*, Tiflis, 1927; A. M. Elchibekian, *Armeniia nakanune Velikogo Oktiabria (fevral-oktiabr 1917)*, Erevan, 1963; S. Vratzian, *Hayastani Hanrapetutun* (Republic of Armenia), 2nd ed., Beirut, 1958; P. G. La Chesnais, *Les peuples de la Transcaucasie pendant la guerre et devant la paix*, Paris, 1921.

³ Oliver Radkey, *The Election to the Russian Constituent Assembly of 1917*, Cambridge, Mass., 1950, pp. 16-20 and appendix. For details on the electoral campaign in the Caucasus, see Archives of the Delegation of the Republic of Armenia to the Paris Peace Conference, files 1/1 and 71/1 (this source cited hereafter as Armenian Delegation Archives).

⁴ For analyses of the programs and organizational composition of the Armenian parties, see Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963; D. Ananun, *Rusahayeri hasarakakan zargatsume* (The Social Development of the Russian Armenians), vols. II-III, Etchmiadzin and Venice, 1922-1926.

loyalty to the so-called Russian Democracy, Dashnaksutun and other Armenian societies tried to deal with the Turkish threat by joining the principal Georgian and Azerbaijani parties in forming an interim Transcaucasian directorate. But neither repeated Armenian concessions in that regional government nor attempts at international diplomacy succeeded in forging an effective front.⁵ The blistering Ottoman offensive began in February 1918, rolled over the Turkish Armenian provinces, and in April pressed into Russian Armenia, exposing the populace to the same fate that had befallen the Western Armenians in 1915-1916. Democratic and parliamentary procedures in the administrative bodies at Tiflis (Tbilisi) could in no way blunt the determined Turkish march.

Even as the Armenian intellectuals floundered helplessly in Tiflis, a few seasoned partisan chiefs at Erevan drew upon the authoritarian tradition in Armenian society and, wasting no energy on lip-service to democratic concepts, established a popular dictatorship, under whose direction the Turkish tide was finally stemmed on the battlefields of Sardarabad and Bash-Abaran. Without that timely armed resistance at the end of May 1918, it might well have been impossible for the "democrats" of the Armenian National Council in Tiflis to declare Armenian independence and to gain Ottoman recognition of the paltry state that they dared define as a republic.⁶

In the following months the Armenian leaders, many of whom transferred from Tiflis to Erevan, continued to cling to democratic ideals. Hovhannes (Ruben Ivanovich) Kachaznuni's cabinet, which supplanted the Erevan dictatorship, was made answerable to the legislature and the legislature, in turn, to the public. As immediate elections in a land lacking pre-existing ruling organs and teeming with countless refugees were then out of the question, the political groups agreed to organize the legislature by multiplying the mem-

⁵ Records of the Transcaucasian executive body (Komissariat) and legislature (Seim) are included in Armenian Delegation Archives, files 2/2 and 65/1; Georgia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Dokumenty i materialy po vneshnei politike Zakavkaz'ia i Gruzii*, Tiflis, 1919; S. T. Arkomed, *Materialy po istorii otpadeniia Zakavkaz'ia ot Rossii*, Tiflis, 1923.

⁶ See G. Korganoff, *La participation des Arméniens à la guerre mondiale sur le front du Caucase, 1914-1918*, Paris, 1927; A. Poidebard, "Rôle militaire des Arméniens sur le front du Caucase après la défection de l'armée russe (décembre 1917-novembre 1918)," *Revue des études arméniennes*, vol. I, pt. 2, 1920, pp. 143-161.

bership of the National Council. Hence, when the Khorhurd (Soviet) convened on August 1, 1918, it was composed of two nonpartisans, eighteen Dashnaktsakans, six Social Revolutionaries, six Social Democrats, and six Zhoghovrdakans (Populists), the counterparts of the Russian Cadets and the Western Armenian Sahmanadir-Ramkavars (Constitutional Democrats). In addition, six Muslims, one Yezidi, and one Russian were seated as representatives of the national minorities. Even with Ottoman cannons positioned ten miles from Erevan, the Armenian leadership aspired to republican institutions.⁷

The Ottoman capitulation to the Allies in October 1918 heightened Armenian hopes for a viable state encompassing both the Caucasian Armenian and Turkish Armenian provinces. Many who had previously regarded independence as a tragic illusion began to believe that, with the patronage of the victorious powers, a reconstituted Armenia might become reality. The Russian Armenian bourgeoisie, too, sublimated their reservations and indicated a willingness to take a more active role in the government, even though the Republic was still landlocked and limited to a few thousand square miles around Erevan. On their part, the standardbearers of Dashnaktsutun welcomed the gesture of the Zhoghovrdakan party, whose membership was distinguished by its record of success in commerce and industry, the service professions, and educational achievement. Moreover, the constitutional planks of the Zhoghovrdakan-Populist platform would appeal to the Allied Powers and the Armenian communities abroad. A working arrangement between the revolutionary, socialist Hai Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutun and the antirevolutionary, liberal Zhoghovrdakan party thus became manifest through the formation of a bipartisan coalition cabinet, November 1918–June 1919.⁸

The Populist ministers assumed their posts with the ardor of reformers. Samson Harutiunian, a prominent advocate, planned the

⁷ Armenian Delegation Archives, file 72. For a lucid analysis (by a prominent Social Revolutionary) of the stance of the Armenian Social Democratic, Socialist Revolutionary, and Populist factions, see Arsham Khondkarian, "Opozitsian Hanrapetakan Hayastanum" (The Opposition in Republican Armenia), *Vem*, vol. I, nos. 1, 2, 1933, and vol. II, nos. 1, 3, 4, 1934.

⁸ Vratzian, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-198; Khondkarian, *op. cit.*, vol. II, no. 4, pp. 73-95.

thorough reorganization of Armenia's legal system to include branches for civil, criminal, and administrative law, appellate courts, a supreme court, and the jury system. Finance Minister Artashes Enfiadjian drafted proposals for the introduction of a national currency, a sound budgetary system, and a progressive income tax. Minister of Enlightenment Mikayel Atabekian began studies for the adoption of an innovative curriculum based on universal, secular, compulsory elementary education, and for the transfer of the Gevorgian seminary-academy from Etchmiadzin to Erevan as the first step in founding a national university. State Controller Minas Berberian outlined methods to ensure the system of checks and balances, so essential in the democratic experience. The programs of the Populist ministers were not commensurate with the grim actualities, but they did nurture visions of a promising future.⁹

However honorable and sincere the endeavor, parliamentary government often seemed confined to the chambers of the cabinet and legislature. Armenia suffered from the near absence of officials versed in republican procedures. It would take years to replace the numerous tsarist bureaucrats who had retained their posts under Armenian rule. Even the few initial mild measures to phase out the *chinovniki* produced intense strains in a country crammed with disease-ridden, starving refugees, devoid of available natural or financial resources, and beset by the animosity of neighboring states that coveted most of its land. In the very heart of the Republic, large clusters of Muslim villages controlled the few fertile agricultural districts, blocked the communication routes, and defiantly rejected the jurisdiction of the Erevan government.¹⁰

Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that there were those who should mock the pretense of democratic rule. They could

⁹ Armenian Delegation Archives, files 13/13 and 421/1. The projects of the coalition cabinet were given broad coverage in the Erevan and Tiflis newspapers, particularly *Ashkhatavor* and *Hayastani ashkhatavor* (Dashnaksakan), *Zhoghovurd* (Populist), *Msak* (Kadet-oriented), and *Kavkazskoe Slovo* (liberal independent).

¹⁰ Extensive materials relating to the demographic-ethnographic complexities in Armenia are included in the following repositories: U.S., The National Archives, record group 59, files 760G.60J, 760J.90C, 860J.00, 860J.4016, and record group 256, files 184.016, 184.021, 867B.00, 867B.4016; Great Britain, Foreign Office Archives, class 371, files 1/58, 33/58, 36/58, 98/58, 134/58, and class 608, files 342, 356, 383; Armenian Delegation Archives, files 69/1 and 69a/1a.

point to the relative effectiveness of the Ministry of the Interior, the least democratic department, which had used extralegal and authoritarian means to wrench some food and supplies from hoarders and speculators, and to loosen the grip of the marauding bandit groups known as "mauserists." Although the uncompromising democrats vociferously protested Interior Minister Aram Manukian's mode of operation, asserting that lawlessness could not be eliminated by resorting to extrajudicial expedients, none could deny that his ministry was the most respected—or feared—among the populace. Manukian's death from typhus in early 1919 quieted the critics but also deprived Armenia of its most adept exponent of authoritarian efficiency.

The physical and political atmosphere in Erevan gradually drained the Populist ministers of optimism. Accustomed to the conveniences of cosmopolitan Tiflis, the Armenian bourgeoisie were stifled by conditions in the squalid town that served as the Republic's provisional capital. But perhaps even more, as adherents of constitutional democracy, they were anguished by the realization that there was scant hope of implementing a true parliamentary system in the foreseeable future. They felt harried by the brashness of some Dashnaktsakan partisans and frustrated by their own inability to cope with the deplorable state of affairs in the countryside. As if to seek respite from this oppressive situation, they found frequent cause to depart on missions to Tiflis. The prolonged leaves of the Zhoghovrdakan ministers were symptomatic of the breaches undermining the coalition cabinet.

Like the executive branch, the Khorhurd, too, faced cumbrous difficulties. Although a republic had been declared and the primary ruling organs created, Armenia possessed neither the requisite experience nor the popular base for the proper exercise of legislative authority. The aspiration to parliamentarianism coupled with the near absence of it resulted in confusion and doubt. In many instances, the Khorhurd adopted legislation borrowed from and suitable to the Western nations, reasoning that similar measures had proved effective in the democracies Armenia hoped to emulate. Perhaps only partially aware of its motivation, the Khorhurd operated on the premise that progressive, albeit premature, legislation might hasten the country's evolution into a veritable republic and

might serve to demonstrate to the Allied Powers, on whose decisions Armenia's fate seemed to rest, that the fledgling state was worthy of their supportive action. And yet there were also influential politicians who insisted that in such critical times dictatorial methods had to be accorded precedence over the slower, perhaps more desirable, but potentially enervating democratic-parliamentary processes.¹¹

The divergent views crystallized around the Muslim question. The authoritarians emphasized that the Republic's recalcitrant minority was part and parcel of the coordinated Turco-Azerbaijani scheme to obliterate Armenia, and that the conciliatory and gradualistic approach advocated by the legislative democrats could not but embolden the seditious elements. On this issue the Khorhurd locked in vehement debate, the most eloquent pleas for interracial and interreligious harmony being made by several deputies of the opposition benches. Ironically, the Muslim population remained oblivious to the polemic and stood prepared to take arms to stay free of Armenian rule, whether authoritarian or democratic.

Within the predominant political organization, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, differing interpretations about the chain of authority also opened deep fissures. Premier Kachaznuni and other comrades who held high public office believed that, inasmuch as national independence had been attained, the supreme party bureau should recede into the shadows of government. As was the pattern in most parliamentary regimes, the Dashnaksakan cabinet members would be responsible to the legislature's party caucus, the proper intermediary between the cabinet and the bureau. Hardline activists rejected this indirect routing, asserting that forthright bureau control was essential in safeguarding the interests of both party and nation. The stalwarts criticized Kachaznuni for abandoning Dashnaksutian's revolutionary heritage in making repeated concessions to the bourgeoisie. The reproaches subsided somewhat after Kachaznuni departed for Europe and America at the head of a mission to secure economic assistance. The premiership then devolved upon

¹¹ The legislative debates have been published as "Hayastani Khorhrdi ardzana-grutiunnere" (The Minutes of the Legislature of Armenia), *Vem*, vol. II, nos. 4-6, 1934, and vol. III, nos. 1-3, 1935. See also *Hayastani Khorhrdi hastatads orenknere, 1918-1919 t.* (The Laws Adopted by the Legislature of Armenia, 1918-1919), Erevan, 1919.

Alexandre Khatisian, who, as mayor of multinational Tiflis for the decade preceding the Russian revolution, had become a master in the art of politics. During his tenure in office, friction between the party and government hierarchies diminished. Yet Khatisian shared many of his predecessor's outlooks, and maneuvered skillfully to enhance the prestige and prerogatives of the cabinet.¹²

The crises weighing upon the Armenian republic in 1919 will not be aired in this essay. Let it suffice to note that relations with Georgia and Azerbaijan were heavily encumbered by conflicting pretensions to the districts of Akhalkalak, Lori, Sharur, Nakhichevan, Zangezur, and Karabagh; that the Allied failure to enforce the Mudros Armistice resulted in the Western Armenian provinces becoming an armed Turkish camp, and in the inability of the Republic to relieve itself of the crushing refugee burden; that the Near Eastern settlement—including a decision on the ultimate boundaries of the new Armenia—was repeatedly postponed by the Allied peacemakers; that arms and matériel with which to defend the Republic and outfit its ragged troops were practically nonexistent; and that the Erevan government could not extend its jurisdiction over all Caucasian Armenia alone.¹³

In view of the above-stated—much understated—circumstances, the decision to conduct nationwide elections was a bold venture. Such courage in the midst of continuing tragedy certainly deserved the plaudits of the disciples of democracy. The Statute for the Elections to the Parliament (Khorhrdaran) of Armenia enfranchised the adult citizenry without regard to sex, religion, or race and provided for direct, general, equal elections with proportional representation. The Central Election Bureau registered some 365,000 voters and posted the slates of candidates that were submitted by the Assyrian Council, the Kurdish Council, the Independent Peasants Union,

¹² Armenian Delegation Archives, file 381/3. For examples of the general criticisms and justifications of Dashnaksutiun's role in government, see the following brochures that, like others of their kind, were written soon after the sovietization of Armenia: H. Kachaznuni, *Dashnaksutiune anelik chuni ailevs* (The Federation Has Nothing More to Do), Vienna, 1923; Ruben Darbinian, *Mer Pataskhane H. Kachaznunii* (Our Response to H. Kachaznuni), Boston, 1923.

¹³ The country's difficulties are described in detail in Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. I, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1971.

the Social Revolutionary party, the Zhoghovrdakan party, and the Dashnaksutium. The Social Democrats who adhered to the Bolshevik faction declared a boycott in protest against the deceptive bourgeois-liberal tactic of parliamentarianism, and against the growing assertion of Armenian separatism from Russia—but quite conceivably the Marxist-internationalists boycotted also because they risked the embarrassment of failing to gain a single seat in a popular contest.¹⁴

Irregularities and some intimidation undoubtedly occurred during the three days of voting in June 1919, but even with these shortcomings the parliamentary election was a landmark in modern Armenian history. As unprepared as the population may have been for republican institutions, it was now afforded a modicum of practical experience. The results posted by the Central Election Bureau showed that Dashnaksutium had garnered more than eighty percent of the vote and won seventy-two of the eighty seats in the new Khorhrdaran, the remaining eight places being assigned to four Social Revolutionaries, three Muslims, and one independent.¹⁵

It was perhaps regrettable, as regards the principle of checks and balances, that Dashnaksutium had secured a near monopoly in the legislature, for the virtual absence of an effective legal opposition narrowed the political base of government. The possibility arose that the cabinet would be dominated by Parliament, the Parliament by the Dashnaksakan caucus, and the caucus by the party bureau. The unhealthy prospect that government and party might become synonymous hung over Armenia. The issue was faced by the Ninth General Congress of the Federation, which drew delegates from around the world to Erevan in September 1919. The non-radical majority upheld the policy of preserving clear distinctions between party and government, and disallowed concurrent membership in the

¹⁴ Armenian Delegation Archives, file 66a/3. For the Bolshevik position, see Institut Istorii Partii pri TsK KP Armenii—Armianskii Filial Instituta Marksizma-Leninizma pri TsK KPSS, *Revoliutsionnye vozzvaniia i listovki, 1902-1921*, Erevan, 1960, pp. 508-511.

¹⁵ U.S. Archives, record group 256, 184.016/81; Armenian Delegation Archives, file 66a/3. It is worthy of note, particularly for the year 1919, that three of the deputies were women.

supreme bureau and cabinet.¹⁶

Throughout the remainder of 1919 and the first part of 1920, the ruling bodies continued to function within the framework of democratic institutions, however meager the results and however unresolved the nation's external and domestic problems. The Allied Powers seemed to excel in procrastination while the Turkish Nationalist movement burgeoned in eastern Anatolia. Internally, Muslim strongholds fanning out from the outskirts of Erevan stood firm in rejection of Armenian suzerainty and harbored many Azerbaijani and Turkish provocateurs. And despite admonitions from several quarters, almost no preventive measures were taken against the rising number of Communists who arrived from central Russia, the North Caucasus, and Baku. Indeed, when security forces in Georgia penetrated the Bolshevik underground, Khatisian's cabinet afforded many endangered Armenian members of the Russian Communist party refuge in the Republic and even employed some in clerical and teaching positions on receipt of their pledges to desist from subversive activity. In Erevan the idealistic defenders of civil liberties, having vilified Romanov and Ottoman suppression, were reluctant to silence political opponents in their own country. Moreover, on the practical level, it was hoped that the Armenian Bolsheviks might serve as sympathetic intermediaries between Erevan and Moscow, and that the Council of People's Commissars might reciprocate with a more tolerant attitude toward Armenian national establishments in Russia and with the eventual recognition of a non-Soviet but friendly independent Armenian republic.¹⁷

The Bolshevik-led uprising in May 1920 impressed upon democrats and authoritarians alike the distressing fact that such expectations had been ethereal. The abortive revolt, which began at Alexandropol (Leninakan) and spread to several other towns, showed that Bolshevik propaganda had made significant inroads, even

¹⁶ The relevant decisions of the Ninth General Congress are in file 1546/27 of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Archives, Boston.

¹⁷ Recent publications of the Institut Istorii Partii have revealed much new information on Bolshevik activities in the pre-Soviet Caucasus. See, for example, *Ocherki istorii Kommunisticheskikh organizatsii Zakavkaz'ia*, Tbilisi, 1967-1971, 2 vols. to date; and *Hayastani Komunistakan kusaksutian patmutian urvagdsar* (Outlines of the History of the Communist Party of Armenia), Erevan, 1967.

swaying a few army units.¹⁸ And the revelation that the insurgents had formed bonds with the chieftains of Muslim-populated districts near Alexandropol tended to substantiate the mounting evidence of a Turco-Bolshevik conspiracy against the Republic. Already, in April of 1920, Turkish notables in Azerbaijan had played an important role in that country's sovietization, an essential preliminary to the opening of a direct land route between Soviet Russia and the Anatolian centers of the Turkish resistance movement.¹⁹

The May uprising muted the theoretical democrats and prompted the swift resignation of Alexandre Khatisian's cabinet. Casting aside all previous reservations, the entire bureau of Dashnaksutjun now entered the cabinet. The bureau-government of Premier Hamazasp Ohandjanian adopted a policy of unconcealed authoritarianism, imposing martial law, suspending civil liberties, and summoning the army to march on the rebel center at the Alexandropol railway depot. The decisive action culminated in the execution of several Bolshevik conspirators and the flight of many more to Soviet Azarbaijan. The crippled Communist organization, driven far underground, would have to await the arrival of the Red Army to celebrate the victory of Soviet order in Armenia.

Spurred on by the success of its ironfisted response to the May uprising, the bureau-government resolved to settle the Muslim problem, which had troubled the Republic since its inception. Minister of War Ruben Ter-Minasian and veteran partisan commander

¹⁸ For an introduction to the voluminous literature on the May uprising and the fluctuating appraisals of it in Soviet historiography, see A. H. Melkonian, *Mayisian apstambutan patmutian hartsi shurdje* (On the Historical Question of the May Rebellion), Erevan, 1965. Hundreds of documents on the subject are included in the British Foreign Office Archives, files 1/58, 36/58, 134/58; U.S. Archives, record group 59, files 760J.61, 860J.00; Armenian Delegation Archives, files 115/14 to 132/31.

¹⁹ Important revelations about early Soviet-Turkish relations as they affected the Transcaucasian republics are made in the following publications: Iu. A. Bagirov, *Iz istorii sovetsko-turetskikh otnoshenii v 1920-1922 gg. (po materialam Azerbaidzhanskoi SSR)*, Baku, 1965; A. M. Shamsutdinov, *Natsional'no-osvoboditel'naia bor'ba v Turtsii, 1918-1923 gg.*, Moscow, 1966; A. N. Kheifets, *Sovetskaia Rossiia i sopredelnye strany Vostoka v gody grazhdanskoi voiny (1918-1920)*, Moscow, 1964; Kazim Karabekir, *Istiklal Harbimiz* (Our War of Independence), Istanbul, 1960; Hüsameddin Ertürk, *İki devrim perde arkası* (Behind the Folds of Two Eras), Istanbul, 1964; Ali Fuat Cebesoy, *Milli mücadele hatıraları* (Memoirs of the National Struggle), Istanbul, 1953; and his *Moskova hatıraları* (Moscow Memoirs), Istanbul, 1955. See also British Foreign Office Archives, class 371, file 345/44.

Drastamat (Dro) Kanayan directed the military campaign, which overpowered the Muslim warriors entrenched in the Zangibasar and Vedibasar districts south of Erevan, and lifted a major barrier to control of the fertile and strategic valley of the Araxes River. The operation produced rich bounty in weapons and foodstuffs and allowed for the resettlement of thousands of Turkish Armenian refugees in the abandoned Muslim villages. By the end of July, the armed forces, having penetrated the Araxes valley as far as Nakhichevan, prepared to unseal Armenia's route to the external world by advancing along the railway to the Persian frontier at Julfa. This significant progress after months of frustration seemed to vindicate the activists who had long demanded an aggressive policy. Democratic principles, they reasoned, might have to be violated temporarily in order to ensure the permanency of democracy in Armenia.²⁰

The subsequent history of the Republic affords little basis on which to evaluate the validity of that logic, for if authoritarianism in the name of democracy was the answer to Armenia's manifold crises, it had been attempted much too tardily. Scarcely had the Armenian troops reached Nakhichevan when they were intercepted by Red Army detachments, which had pressed over Karabagh and Zangezur from Azerbaijan and established liaison with nearby Turkish battalions, thus forging the last crucial link between Soviet Russia and Nationalist Turkey. Only weeks later, Mustafa Kemal ordered the Turkish Eastern Army Group to strike across the border, with the fortress of Kars and the railway center of Alexandropol as primary objectives.

Even as the Turkish invasion extended into the Republic's heartlands from the west and as Red Army units concentrated along the northeastern frontier to enforce an ultimatum for Armenia to accept the Soviet system, the democratic-parliamentary process flickered for one final time. The bureau-government gave way to a coalition cabinet headed by Simon Vratzian, who shouldered the onerous obligation of securing peace at almost any price. Ironically, on De-

²⁰ Primary materials on the bureau-government are included in Armenian Delegation Archives, files 10/10 to 28/28 *passim*; British Foreign Office Archives, class 371, files 134/58 and 1370/58.

ember 2, 1920, it was by the parliamentary procedure of formally acquiescing in the sovietization of Armenia that the Khorhrdaran confirmed its own demise and, more significantly, that of the independent Republic.²¹

The democratic and authoritarian dimensions of the Armenian republic perhaps should not be regarded as contradictory. It may be argued that authority enhanced democracy and that democracy gave authoritarianism justifiable purpose. Moreover, the experiment in independence was not of sufficient duration for the efficacy of either democracy or authority to become convincingly manifest. A general overview does indicate that the most impressive periods of government activity were characterized by authoritarianism. Yet, the tenacity with which the Armenian leaders clung to democratic ideals underscores the indelible impact that the revolutionary-reformist tradition had upon their generation. They may even have been the prisoners of their ideals, for at times these led to hesitation when survival depended on resolve or, by contrast, to harmful self-rationalizations when firm measures seemed to violate cherished principles. But whatever the judgment, the generation bowed to a new leadership and the Republic of Armenia yielded to Soviet Armenia, where the enigmatic conceptions of democracy and authority stubbornly persist today.

²¹ On December 2, Soviet envoys and officials of the Armenian government signed the formal document establishing the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia, with guarantees by Soviet Russia to retrieve for Armenia the territories lost to the Turkish Nationalist armed forces and to accord amnesty to all those persons who had previously engaged in anti-Soviet activity. However, three days earlier, on November 29, a number of Armenian Bolsheviks had advanced from Soviet Azerbaijan into the border district of Karvansarai (Ichevan), there proclaiming Armenia to be a Soviet republic. Inasmuch as the treaty of December 2 was soon repudiated by the new government, November 29 was popularized as the founding date of the Armenian SSR.